

Headteachers' Perceptions of the Relationship between Parental Support and Learners' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Bureti District, Kenya

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Abstract

Parental support has been central to realizing quality education. Parental support in areas of fees, teaching materials, uniforms and labour has been vital for the expansion of education in Kenya. However, a low retention level which is an indicator of internal efficiency has remained a challenge in most public secondary schools. Consequently, the study sought to establish the headteachers' perceptions of the relationship between parental support and learners' retention in public secondary schools in Bureti District, Kenya. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The head teachers of public secondary schools constituted the respondents of the study. A sample of 30 respondents was drawn for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for study. The study used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. The research instruments were pilot tested on headteachers that were not part of the study sample. Using Cronbach's alpha, an index of 0.874 for the questionnaire was established to mean it was reliable. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics technique were used to analyze data with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20). To make reliable inferences from the data, all statistical tests were subjected to a test of significance at coefficient alpha (α -level= 0.05) equal to 0.05. The study revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between parental support to education and learners' retention levels. This study recommends that school leaders be guided to interrogate this relationship in a way that will provide policy direction in enhancing retention among secondary school learners.

Keywords: Parental Support, Learners' Retentions, Public Secondary Schools, Bureti, Kenya.

Background of the Study

Education is the vehicle through which the society transforms its culture and talents to the youth (Kiumi, 2007). Stakeholders have emphasized that developing countries need to invest more in education and ensure that systems of education are efficiently managed so that the funds allocated to the sector have maximum impact (World Bank, 2011). Gonad (2007) highlights that efficiency gains in education spending will have large effects on Gross Domestic Product in the long run. Investment in education is seen to pose some influences on the level of school retention levels. Thus, parents are asked to contribute their children education through payment of fees (Nyaga, 2005). User fees have been identified as a barrier to education (Veriava, 2002). Kweyu (2009) observed that good parental support would include meeting their financial obligations timely at school. It is further viewed that timely payment of user fees is a catalyst for enhanced academic activities seen to improve retention levels of learners in secondary schools (Ngare, 2012).

Family related factors such as low socio-economic status which lowers the parents' capacity to pay school fees and also buy reading materials for their children, and low educational attainment of parents who thus cannot motivate their children to learn contribute to low internal efficiency (Odebero, 2002). The low retention levels is further worsened by the negative perceptions held by some students towards education, which due to high level of educated unemployment causes poor attitudes towards regular schooling (Verspoor, 2008). In Kenya, the stakeholders recognize that although major strides have been made in education in quantitative terms, there are serious shortcomings in the education system. Despite heavy investments in the 8:4:4 system of education, high wastage as a result of low retention in school among secondary school learners is experienced (GoK, 2012). Wastage is the worst form of inefficiency because when learners drop out of school, resources already invested in them go to waste.

A study carried out by Achoka (2007) on ten cohorts between 1990 and 2002 revealed that dropout rates for the ten cohorts ranged between ten and fifty percent. Emerging from this fact is a crucial question, where do the girls and boys who drop out of these cohorts go? And what do they do where ever they go? Kenya incurs a loss through drop out in educational sector (Kiveu, 2009). The drop out signifies unfulfilled aim, goal and objective for the individual, community, and nation as a whole. For instance, for any drop out at the secondary school level, the country loses the potential workforce. Thus in Kenya, all education stakeholders must consider over some of the specific factors that may be contributing to cases of dropout. Some of the major factors, which are behind low retentions, have been highlighted as education policies and institutional processes; school-based factors; and household and community based factors (Abagi & Odipo, 1997). This study was interested in the relationship between parental support and learners' retention in public secondary schools in

Bureti District, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

For the purpose of accountability, resources invested in education should yield desired outcomes. In Kenya, enormous resources have been invested in public secondary school education for the purpose of promoting educational quality. This goal cannot be attained without efficiency of the education system. The investment on education is based on the assumption that schools will be efficient in their operation to yield desired outcomes. However, this may not be the case given the poor academic standards occasioned by low retentions among learners in many public secondary schools. Bureti District was a case in point. There was therefore need for empirical evidence on the situation of retentions in the public secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the head teachers' perceptions of the relationship between parental support to education and learners' retention in public secondary schools in Bureti District.

Objective of the Study

The following objective guided the study:

- i. To establish the headteachers' perceptions of the relationship between parental support and learners' retention in public secondary schools.

Hypothesis of the Study

In pursuing the objective of the Study, the following hypothesis was employed:

HO₂: There is no statistically significant relationship between parental support and learners' retention in public secondary schools.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are useful to teachers, education officers, policy makers, curriculum developers, researchers, parents and communities in their efforts to manage this vice. The findings sensitize teachers to pay more attention on various parental practices that have negative impact on retention levels and consequently make recommendations through which this can be addressed. To education officers, the findings are useful in providing pieces of advice to parents based on the outcome of the analysis on various practices at home with an aim of inculcating those that encouraged high retention levels.

To the policy makers, the findings of the study are useful in formulation of policies and strategies aimed at reversing the general negative trends in retention levels with secondary school education. Knowledge of the influence of parental support to education on retention of learners in public secondary schools would help policy makers and curriculum developers to formulate relevant policies and strategies aimed at keeping school dropout at bay.

The study findings provide valuable reference materials to the researchers for further research work. Researchers would find the materials on the topic useful in laying the ground for further researches. To parents and communities, who contribute the education resources used in schools, the findings of the study were a source of inspiration to cooperate with schools and education administrators in managing educational institutions with an aim of achieving the desired educational output.

Scope of the Study

This study comprised the head teachers of public secondary schools in Bureti District. Information on the relationship between parental support to education and learners' retention in public secondary schools was sought using a structured questionnaire and an interview schedule to elicit information from the respondents.

Limitations of the Study

- (i) The location and sample size required generalization with caution where conditions of learning are different in the rest of the country and outside.

Assumptions of the Study

- i) Headteachers understood the purpose of the instrumentation and answered the question items honestly and to the best of their ability.

Parental Support and Learners' Retention in Public Secondary Schools

Internationally, Parents control the initial decision of a child to attend school and often influence the nature of a child's participation in education. Support that children receive in education may influence persistence with school. Retention of learners in secondary schools is strongly related to family background and education of parents (Afonso, 2006). Parental support is critical in the area of moral, psychological and basic necessities of the child towards shaping of the child's life (Pelt, 2009; Holford, 2010). Ngwiri (2008) asserts that the parent is the first teacher of the child. Moreover, parental contribution in areas of fees, teaching materials, uniforms and labour has been vital for the expansion of education in Kenya (GoK, 2012). Parental participation can be enhanced by ensuring that demands on them are kept to the minimum and are related to improvement of the learning. Amounts of funds demanded as well as reasons for such demands should be worked out with the consensus of all parents through real democratized process and most important of all, ensure that parent's contribution are correctly utilized in ways that are clearly transparent and accountable.

Schools must understand that lack of participation by the parents does not necessarily mean they are neglecting their responsibilities. They simply may not have the time, resources, or know-how to help. Parents do not feel welcomed at school and feel that what they may have to offer is unimportant and unappreciated (Wanat, 1992). Parents may not believe that they have any knowledge that the school is interested in knowing. This is especially true when the parent does not have a great deal of education (Dixon, 1992). The Parent may not feel that education is important due to lack of interest in the school or his child's education (Vandergrift & Greene, 1992). By working with the parents more, the school will have a better idea of what the parents can and cannot do.

Parental involvement in almost any form produces measurable gains in student's achievement (Dixon, 1992). The concept of parental involvement with the student and the school is a vital one and can produce great rewards for all concerned. However, it has been found that schools do not always know what the term parental involvement really means (Vandergrift & Greene, 1992). In fact, there are two key elements that function together to make up the concept of parental involvement. One of these is a level of commitment to parental support. This includes such things as encouraging the student, being sympathetic, reassuring, and understanding. The other element needed is a level of parental activity and participation, such as doing something that is observable. Thus, a combination of level of commitment and active participation is what makes an involved parent. Koros (2006) notes that parents in most secondary schools in Kericho district have been involved to some extent in funding of education, disciplining of students, student counseling, academic progress of students and motivation of teachers. This results in reduction of strikes, pregnancies, suspension and absenteeism that affects internal efficiency in secondary schools.

Theoretical Framework

The social systems theory was used to guide this study. It is made up of three main stages, the input, throughput, and output stages (Paula, 1983). This theory states that schools import information, capital, human resources from the environment, also referred to as inputs into the school system. This theory provides a framework for the analysis of head teachers' perceptions on the relationship between parental and learners' retention in public secondary schools. The theory operates on the premise that schools are in constant dynamic interaction with the larger external environment in which they exist. In an attempt to establish this relationship, the school is viewed from an open system's perspective (Green, 2005). External forces interact and in the process, they influence learners' retention in school. Schools draw parental support from the external environment. These resources are then subjected to educational transformation process through curriculum delivery. This process does not take place in isolation. Internal forces also interact and in the process, influence retention.

Conceptual Framework

This model was developed to include the interrelationships between independent, intervening and dependent variables of the study. The conceptual model attempts to combine all units of analysis in the education process that relate to the study. In this section, head teachers' perceptions on the relationship between parental support and learners' retention in public secondary schools were highlighted. Figure 1 shows the interrelationship between the variables of the study.

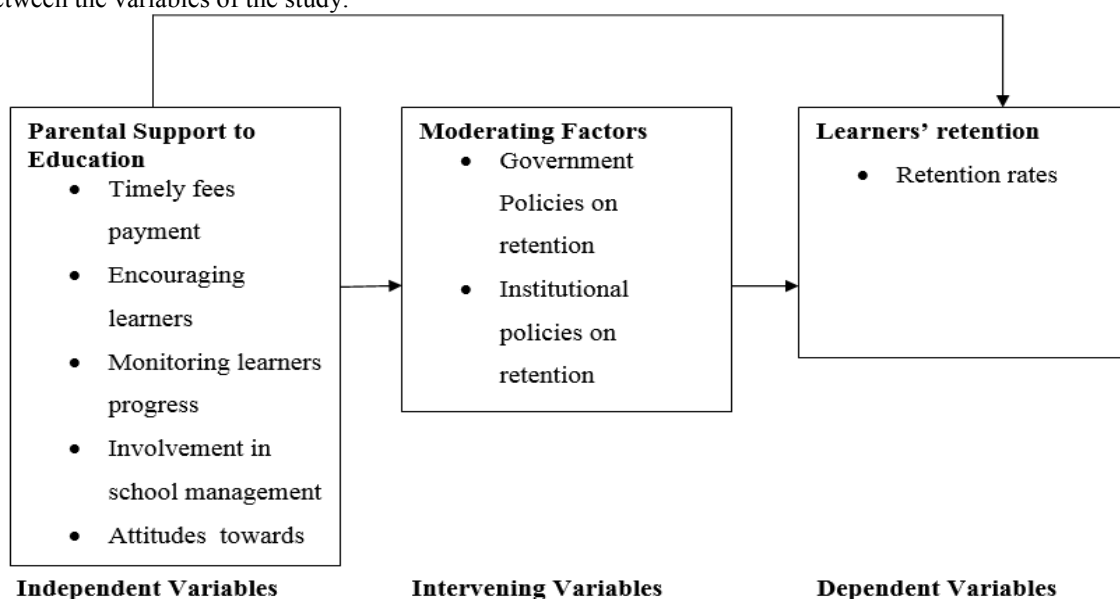


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing Interrelationship between Variables

Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey research design. It is the most frequently used method for collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Kothari, 2011). The study was carried out in Bureti District (Kericho County). The rationale for choosing the district is that: there are incidences of low retention among learners, the researcher's own interest and knowledge of the area. The target population comprised head teachers of public secondary schools in Bureti District. The sample size for the study was determined according to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) who recommended the following formula that was developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP (1-P)}{D^2 (N-1) + X^2 P (1-P)}$$

Where S = required sample size, N = the given population size, P = population proportion assumed to be 0.5 as this yields the maximum possible sample size required, D = the degree of occurrence with the highest occurrence and X^2 = the table value of Chi-square for one degree of freedom. Inserting the required information into the formula where N=30, P= 0.5, D= 0.05 and $X^2 = 3.841^2$ gives: S = $\frac{3.841^2 \times 31 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2 (31-1) + 3.841^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}$

$$= \frac{3.841^2 \times 31 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2 (31-1) + 3.841^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)} = 30.382195 \approx 30 \text{ public secondary school headteachers.}$$

Simple random sampling using the lottery technique was used to select the respondents (headteachers) for the study. According to Mutai (2000), this procedure is applied to ensure that the sample selection is independent of human judgment; and that the chance of selection for each member of the population would be non-zero. The head teacher from each of the selected schools was an automatic respondent for the study. This sampling procedure brought the total sample size to 30 respondents.

Validity is established by expert judgment (Gay, 1987); therefore, the instruments were reviewed by the study supervisors and other three educational experts in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Education Management within the Faculty of Education and Community Studies of Egerton University. Validation of instruments was carried out to improve their effectiveness for collecting relevant data.

Reliability of the instruments was determined by computation of Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. An index of at least 0.70 was taken to mean instruments were reliable (Frankel & Wallen, 2003). The questionnaires and interview schedule were found to have 0.874 and 0.803 reliability index respectively, thus they were considered appropriate for data collection. Having revised the instruments basing on the comments from the educational experts and the reliability results, the question items were appropriately administered to the selected sample. Descriptive statistics were used in describing the results of the obtained data. Inferential statistics specifically Chi-square was used to analyze data for the hypothesis set. The statistical value for rejecting or accepting the hypothesis of the study was 5% alpha level. Analysis of data was performed with the help of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme version 20.

Retention Rates in Schools

This study was interested in determining the mean retention rates in the schools covered in the study. The retention rates were relatively high as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Retention Rates in Schools

Statistics	Retention Rates
Mean	87.27
Standard Error	0.78
Standard Deviation	4.28
Range	15.29
Minimum	82.67
Maximum	97.96

Source: Field Data

The mean retention rates for the studied schools were 87.27 and ranged between a minimum of 82.67 and a maximum 97.96 with a standard deviation of 4.28. Retention rates did not differ significantly among the various types and categories of schools in the study area as shown in Table 2. **Retention Rates by school Categories**

Analyses results by school categories is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Retention Rates Among Various Schools

Internal Efficiency	Major categories	Minor Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	F-Ratio (2,27)	P-Value
Retention	School type	Boys	8	87.2	3.111	1.100	.110	.897
		Girls	8	87.9	4.782	1.691		
		Mixed	14	87.0	4.800	1.283		
	School category	Day	10	87.4	5.480	1.733	.702	.505
		Boarding	15	87.8	3.987	1.029		
		Day and boarding	5	85.2	1.767	0.790		

Source: Field Data

Table 2 shows the retention rate was highest in girls' schools representing about eighty seven point nine percent (87.9%) and was closely followed by boys' schools representing eighty seven point two percent (87.2%) and mixed schools representing eighty seven points zero (87.0%). The difference between the retention rates in the different types of schools was not statistically significant with an F-ratio of .110 with a P-value of .897. Retention rates were highest in boarding schools representing eighty seven point nine percent (87.9%) and were closely followed by day schools representing eighty seven point four percent (87.4%) and both day and boarding schools representing eighty five point two percent (85.2%). However, the retention rates in the different categories of schools were not significantly different with an F-ratio of .702 with a P-value of .505.

Parental support and learners' retention levels in public secondary schools

The objective of this study was to establish the headteachers' perceptions on the relationship between parental support and learners' retention in public secondary schools. In order to meet this objective, a null hypothesis, 'There is no statistically significant relationship between parental support and learners' retention in public secondary schools as perceived by headteachers' was formulated for analysis using non-parametric Chi-square test. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship Between Parental Support and Retention Levels

Parental Support and Retention Levels		Responses in Percentages						Test Statistics		
		SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	χ^2	Df	P-Value
1	Timely fees payment	3.3	10	3.3	46.7	36.7	100	24.7	4	0.000
2	Attendance of school organized meetings	0	16.7	6.7	50	26.7	100	12.4	4	0.006
3	Encouragement of learners	3.3	13.3	3.3	40	40	100	21	4	0.000
4	Monitoring learners' progress	3.3	13.3	3.3	46.7	33.3	100	22.3	4	0.000
5	Involvement in school management	0	16.7	6.7	46.7	30	100	10.8	4	0.013
6	Positive attitude to education	3.3	13.3	0	50	33.3	100	15.6	4	0.001
7	Disciplining of learners	0	3.3	13.3	50	33.3	100	15.6	4	0.001
8	Guidance on careers	0	10	10	50	30	100	13.2	4	0.004
9	Counseling of learners	3.3	13.3	0	50	33.3	100	15.6	4	0.001

Critical Value = 9.488 (4 df, 0.05 alpha),

Source: Field Data

With regard to headteachers perception on how timely fees payment by parents enhances retention rates in school, this study observed that majority, eighty three point four percent (83.4%) believed that the statement was true. Specifically, forty six point seven percent (46.7%) and thirty six point seven percent (36.7%) of the headteachers agreed and strongly agreed with the statement respectively. However, ten point zero percent (10.0%) and three point three percent (3.3%) of the headteachers disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively. About three point three percent (3.3%) of the headteachers were not decided about their comment. The Chi-square analysis results (Table 3) indicated a calculated value of 24.7 at 4 degrees of freedom (significant at 5% level since the p-value of 0.000 was calculated). This implies that majority of the headteachers believed that retention rates in schools are influenced by parents' timely payment of fees. In concurrence with this finding, Kweyu (2009) observes that good parental support would include meeting their financial obligations timely at school.

With regard to headteachers perception on how parental attendance of school organized meetings enhances retention rates among learners; this study observed that majority, seventy six point seven percent (76.7%) believed that the statement was true. Specifically, fifty points zero percent (50.0%) and twenty six point seven percent (26.7%) of the headteachers agreed and strongly agreed with the statement respectively. However, sixteen point seven percent (16.7%) of the headteachers disagreed with the statement while six point seven percent (6.7%) were not decided. From Table 3, the Chi-square analysis results indicated a calculated value of 27.3 at 4 degrees of freedom (significant at 5% level since the p-value of 0.006 was calculated). This implies that

majority of the headteachers believed that retention rates in schools are influenced by parental attendance of school organized meetings. This finding seems to concur with Holford (2010) who observes that parents attending school function or conferences serve as good role model.

Likewise, eighty point zero percent (80.0%) of the headteachers seemed to agree with the statement, 'parents' encouragement of learners enhances retention rates in school'. Specifically, forty point zero percent (40.0%) of the headteachers agreed with the statement while an equal proportion strongly agreed. However, thirteen point three percent (13.3%) and three point three percent (3.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively. About three point three percent (3.3%) were not decided. The Chi-square analysis results (Table 3) indicate a calculated value of 21.0 at 4 degrees of freedom (significant at 5% alpha level since the p-value of 0.000 was calculated). This implies that majority of the headteachers believed that retention rates in schools are influenced by parental encouragement of the learners. This finding seems to be consistent with earlier observations by Short and Greer (2002) that with proper encouragement by parents, students can become vital in shared decision making process, which they would own and increase desire for learning at school level.

On the issue of monitoring, eighty point zero percent (80.0%) of the headteachers seemed to agree with the statement, 'monitoring learners' progress in school by parents enhances retention rates'. Specifically, forty six point seven percent (46.7%) of the headteachers agreed with the statement while thirty three point three percent (33.3%) strongly agreed. However, thirteen point three percent (13.3%) and three point three percent (3.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively. About three point three percent (3.3%) were not decided.

A Chi-square statistic (Table 3) for the relationship between parents' monitoring learners' progress in school and retention rates was calculated as 22.3 at 4 degrees of freedom (df). Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 5% significant level, this study concludes that retention rates of students in schools is highly influenced by parents' monitoring of learners school progress. In agreeing to the finding, UNICEF (2012) observes that students whose parents monitor and regulate their activities, provide emotional support, encourage independent decision making and are more involved in their schooling are less likely to drop out of school.

On the other hand, seventy six point seven percent (76.7%) of the headteachers seemed to agree with the statement, 'parental involvement in school management enhances retention rates among learners'. Specifically, forty six point seven percent (46.7%) of the headteachers agreed with the statement while thirty points zero percent (30.0%) strongly agreed. However, sixteen point seven percent (16.7%) disagreed but none, zero point zero percent (0.0%) strongly disagreed with the statement. About six point seven percent (6.7%) were not decided. Thus the study concludes that parental involvement in school management enhances retention rates among learners. This implies that majority of the headteachers believed that retention rates in schools are influenced by parental involvement in school management. This concurs with Tirop (2012) that parents in small upcoming schools have a bigger burden of even recruiting staff (both teaching and non-teaching staff) thereby positively affecting the quality of service to learners. Further, Pelt (2009) avers that parental involvement is the only variable with appreciable positive impact on high school student's education attainment. It is therefore imperative for parents to team up with school management to accomplish the performance goal.

On the attitude to education, eighty three point three percent (83.3%) of the head teachers seemed to agree with the statement, 'parental positive attitude to education enhances retention rates'. Specifically, fifty point zero percent (50.0%) of the headteachers agreed with the statement while thirty three point three percent (33.3%) strongly agreed. However, thirteen point three percent (13.3%) and three point three percent (3.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively. None, zero point zero percent (0.0%) of the headteachers was undecided about this issue. From Table 3, the Chi-square analysis results (calculated value of 15.6 at 4 degrees of freedom) indicate a significant relationship between parental positive attitude and students retention rates in schools at 5% level since the calculated p-value of 0.001 was less than significance level. Thus, this study concludes that parental positive attitude to education enhances retention rates in public secondary schools. In support of the finding, Masibo and Kiragu (2007) note that parental positive attitude to education is critical in fighting retrogressive cultures such as early marriages and female genital mutilations.

On the other hand, eighty three point three percent (83.3%) of the headteachers seemed to agree with the statement, 'disciplining of learners by parents enhances retention rates'. Specifically, fifty point zero percent (50.0%) of the headteachers agreed with the statement while thirty three point three percent (33.3%) strongly agreed. However, three point three percent (3.3%) disagreed but none, zero point zero percent (0.0%) strongly disagreed with the statement. About thirteen point three percent (13.3%) were not decided. From Table 3, the Chi-square analysis results (calculated value of 15.6 at 4 degrees of freedom) indicate a significant relationship between disciplining of learners by parents and students retention rates in schools at 5% alpha level since the calculated p-value of 0.001 was less than significance level. On the basis of this data, the study concludes that disciplining of learners by parents enhances promotion rates. According to Koros (2006), parental support in terms of disciplining of students results in reduction of strikes, pregnancies, suspension and absenteeism that in the long run contribute to a drop in retention levels.

On the parental guidance, eighty points zero percent (80.0%) of the headteachers seemed to agree with the statement, 'parental guidance on careers enhances retention rates'. Specifically, fifty points zero percent (50.0%) of the headteachers agreed with the statement while thirty points zero percent (30.0%) strongly agreed. However, ten points zero percent (10.0%) disagreed and an equal portion ten percent (10.0%) of the headteachers was undecided about this issue. From table 3, the Chi-square analysis results (calculated value of 13.2 at 4 degrees of freedom) indicate a significant relationship between parental guidance on careers and students retention rates in schools at 5% level since the calculated p-value of 0.004 was less than significance level. Existing researches seem to acknowledge that parental guidance of students in making decisions about career choices increases the desire for learning at school level (Short & Greer, 2002).

On the other hand, eighty three point three percent (83.3%) of the headteachers seemed to agree with the statement, 'parental counseling of secondary school learners enhances retention rates'. Specifically, fifty points zero percent (50.0%) of the headteachers agreed with the statement while thirty three point three percent (33.3%) strongly agreed. However, thirteen point three percent (13.3%) and three point three percent (3.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively. None, zero point zero percent (0.0%) of the headteachers was undecided about this issue. From Table 3, the Chi-square analysis results (calculated value of 15.6 at 4 degrees of freedom) indicate a significant relationship between parental counseling of secondary school learners and students' retention rates in schools at 5% alpha level since the calculated p-value of 0.001 was less than significance level. This revelation agrees with Pelt (2009) who found partnership of parents with the school in counseling of the child handy in raising retention levels.

Summary of Findings

It was found that timely fees payment by parents, parental attendance of school organized meetings, parental involvement in school management, disciplining of learners by parents, parental guidance on careers and parental counseling of secondary school learners are some of the parental factors that enhance retention levels in schools. This was confirmed by Chi-square analysis that revealed these variables to be significant at 5% level.

Conclusion

From the headteachers' responses, there is an indication that: timely payment of school fees by parents; parental attendance of school organized meetings; parental encouragement of learners; parental monitoring of learners progress; parental involvement in school management; parental positive attitude to education; disciplining of learners by parents; parental guidance on careers; parental counseling are measures for raising learners' retention levels.

Implications of the Study

The implication at this level of education is that parental: timely fees payment; attendance of school organized meetings; encouragement of learners; monitoring learners' progress; involvement in school management; positive attitude to education; disciplining of learners; guidance on careers and counseling of learners as critical ingredients for raising retention levels, should be held in high regards. Therefore, fertile grounds for these factors to play have to be created by various education stakeholders with the view of realizing high learners' retention levels.

Recommendations of the Study

Applying the current findings, parental support factors (Table 3) such as timely fees payment, attendance of school organized meeting, involvement in school management, disciplining of learners, guidance on careers and counseling of learners were found to have statistically significant relationship with retention of learners in school. This may guide school managers to pay more attention to these factors in enhancing learners' retention levels.

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